

Final Project Proposal

Zhang Yan

1. Project Outlines

Since I moved far away from my homeland, I feel I am now knowing better about who I am and where I come from, so I have the desire to introduce my culture background in a creative way. Everytime people ask me what is the most important part of Chinese culture, I answer FOOD without hesitation. Actually, Chinese culture has grown from the enjoyment of food. There is an old Chinese idiom that "people regard food as sky", which means food is the first and foremost concern for everyone. We pay great attention on food among the thousand years of history. So I think food is an interesting viewing point and appropriate medium to show the culture, and then I decided to do this food project. The final form will be short video series, which are threaded together by one story or concept. I am currently doing research on the general introduction of Chinese food culture, and interesting stories and meaning about certain food, such as red bean and its love story. Thinking in this way, food can be something else, not only an eatable stuff. They tell stories, show emotion and represent culture. That is what I want to dive into and convey to the audience.

2. Relationship to Previous Practice



Screenshots of "waiting for the bus", "miss", "down the rabbit-hole"

During last academy year, I practiced different methods to do animation, from frame-by-frame drawing to manipulated analogue action, from linear

storytelling to non-narrative. I learnt most aspects of knowledge and tried to find my favourite style and technique.

The four-minutes, digital frame-by-frame drawing animated film *Waiting for the Bus* was a project I did in the second trimester. I started with the goal to improve storytelling skill and learn how to organize a comprehensive animation project. But I did not have sufficient time to make the film as perfect as I expected, but to keep it as simple as possible. I was exhausted after this project. I think the reason is first drawing animation is 80% production, so independent animators have no choice to work as a drawing machine. For this film, I have drawn thousands frames in ten weeks. Second, I was strictly following the traditional methodology step by step, from sketch, storyboard, layout drawing to test video, etc. It is great experience learning the scientific assembly line, but once you confirmed the pre-production design, you almost know the final outcome, and start working mechanically on the production and post-production stages. Unfortunately, the results are usually not as good as imagined, because watching at the same thing for a long time consumes passion. Therefore, I decided not doing this any more.

In the third trimester, I did *MISS ink experiment* project and *Down the Rabbit Hole* based on *Alice in Wonderland*. Both of them are very short, one is 1 minute, the other is 30 seconds. They are also non-narrative, as I want to purely focused on the image. The ink video is the most difficult but successful one in the year. Through it, I changed my habitual working and thinking ways. I got stuck and suffered a lot in the middle, because I get used to work with careful plans. However, keeping the content open leaves more space to explore. And I have the surprises beyond the imagination. I like this exact randomness, and want to apply it for my final project. So this time, I will also start from experiments. Let unknown lead the future.

Technically, I am interested in mixed-media, and did my BA degree thesis on the topic. I would like to use different materials together, such as drawing, photo, live action video and stop-motion sequence. In this way, I can blend real and fantasy, which is the magic animation brings.

3. Work Plan

I started the final project with brainstorming, reading and proposal writing. Through reading, I learnt a lot about Chinese food and culture I did not know before. I was surprised but also confused that there are so many interesting and meaningful things around food. I have many directions to go, but still not clear enough. My tutor said thinking with hands, just start doing something as rough test and sketch. The image I made will show me the way. So the second stage, where I am now, is material experiments while researching. The first experiment is on beans, because I really like the love bean story. I put red, green and soya beans in a plate with water, and waiting for them budding. I also want to transform their physical shape via cooking. Generally in this stage, I will try all experiments that I can think about, on the other hand, set up an overall concept for the project through researching. After experiments, hopefully I can get some images that can be used in the video. The content will become clear from those random materials. Next, I will add digital animation on the footages, and composite them to make fluent transition.

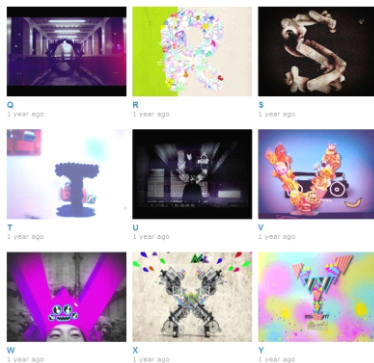
4. Expected Outcomes

In the end, I plan to present a short film series, about 5 videos in total, each one is nearly 1 minute long. The reason why I chose this form is I am afraid that I will get bored in a long-term project. I think it is better to work on different and short videos, so that I can keep passion and freshness.

Besides, I can focus more on the image developing while doing shorts. I hope every single second of my video is beautiful and eye-catching, in order to attract viewers to stay still and watch it. Each film can be different in technique and aesthetic. They can stand by themselves. But also make sense and become stronger when they are put together. Therefore, I want to find a very good story or concept to unify them in wise way.

In terms of thesis, I hope I can make a nice and unique food book to introduce food culture and some dishes in my personal point of view. It can also be a menu, showing food and telling stories at the same time, just like the video series. I would like to do some graphic and editorial design on it, to make the thesis interesting, not only a pale paper.

5. Reference



a-z video series, Daniele Manoli
www.danielemanoli.com

Daniele Manoli made a short film series on 26 letters. Each short is about one letter, and the content is a personal definition of the letter. For example, A is for analog, B is for brandead, C is for corpus, D is for Daniele Manoli. He used different techniques and style, so I will keep watching one by one and never be bored.



Food, Jan Švankmajer
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oOLuBxgYHc>

Jan Švankmajer is a Czech filmmaker and artist whose work spans several media. I think this food series and his other food films are mainly focus on eating, the behaviour. The techniques he used in these films are stop-motion and clay animation. The thing I most appreciate is the metaphor, that he used food to talk about

politics and social problems. The way he communicates is very clever and distinct.



Alimotion, Alexandre
vimeo.com/23854203

Alexandre Dubosc, a young French director and photographer, created several clever animations from food for the Annecy Festival. His short film "Alimotion" shows a series of ingenious and extremely appetizing animations made with food. He used a old zoetrope technique to create very fresh and lovely result. "Food About You" is another short film of him, a mixture of stop-motion and pixilation, provided an imaginative and funny viewing point on food.

6. Research background

It is Confucius, however, who regards good cuisine as an enjoyment in life rather than simply a need. "I have absolutely no objection that the grains are fine and the pork slices tender and delectable." Chinese cuisine is not a general and vague concept. It attaches great importance to the color, smell and taste of the food, its myriad regional styles and flavors and its profound cultural underpinning. China, with its vast territory and a long and unbroken history, has given rise to a diverse spectrum of variety of regional flavors and styles. Moreover, there is an endless list of innumerable specialty snacks and refreshments.

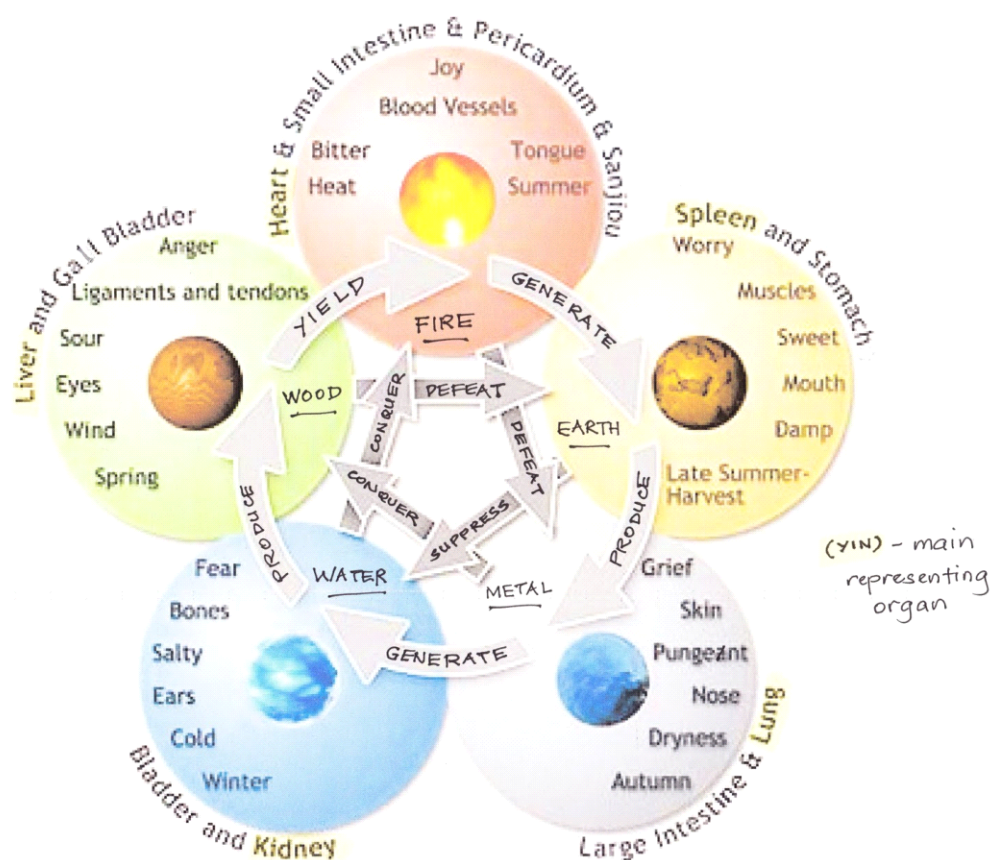
I found interesting philosophy about food and healthy, which is Yin-Yang and five elements:

... Yin translates as "in the shade" and represents the moon, darkness, coldness, and passivity. Yang translates as "in the sunlight" and represents

the sun, light, heat, and activity. The Yin-Yang philosophy emphasizes the need for harmony, balance, and moderation in every aspect in life and nature in order to support the vital force of life, called qi. Qi is equated with "energy," "air," and "breath," and when qi is out of whack, we develop illnesses and diseases.

There are five elements that need to be balanced in order to sustain a healthy qi. Fire, earth, metal, water, and wood correspond with five organs heart, spleen, lungs, kidneys, and gallbladder, respectively. The five elements also correspond with the seasons summer, late summer, autumn, winter, and spring; and the colors red, yellow, white, blue, and green; and the tastes bitter, sweet, pungent, salty, and sour, as well as other properties such as odors, sounds, times of day, and emotions. ...

----Yin and Yang: Balancing Health with Food, by Amy Chen



In addition, there are many ancient poetry about food. My favourite one is the poem of red bean. it is well-known by most Chinese people. We use red bean as a symbol of loving and missing. It is also a yang food, usually to be cooked for sweet soup to keep our body warm.

ONE-HEARTED

by Wang Wei

When those red berries come in springtime,
Flushing on your southland branches,
Take home an armful, for my sake,
As a symbol of our love.

Going further, I found the story that why people regard red bean as love bean:

More than 4600 years ago, the war raged for years. One day, one of the herders was pressed to go into battle. With great reluctance, the man left his wife, a lovely woman, and his children. With hope and longing for his return, the wife spent every day looking for the return of her husband. Each dawn and dusk, leaning on a large tree on a high mountain, she would watch the horizon where she had seen him vanish, only to face another day of disappointment. But war is cruel, and her husband never returned. Because of her deep love, the woman wept, under the big tree, almost every moment while she was keeping her vigil. As time passed, her tears turned to blood and as these tears dropped to the ground they hardened and became red beans. The red beans sprouted and eventually a forest of big trees grew at the site where the wife had expressed her devotion and love. The legend of this love story grew and the people started calling the fruit of this tree - love beans.

I am also reading the articles written by famous contemporary authors about their personal memory and experience about food. But I am more fascinated by these ancient stories behind food. They are old and beautiful, but almost forgotten by people living in the "New Era", just like all kinds of traditional culture. So pity! I think it is meaningful to let people know and appreciate these old culture. This can be a direction to go.

7. Bibliography

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